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### *Citation for published version (APA):*

Roueché, C. M. (2007). From Aphrodisias to Stauropolis. In R. Salway, & J. Drinkwater (Eds.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz reflected* (pp. 183-192). (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies)..

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# FROM APHRODISIAS TO STAUROPOLIS

## CHARLOTTE ROUECHÉ

Wolf Liebeschuetz has, throughout his career, pulled together evidence for facets of late antique life, and made them available, with consistent generosity of spirit. He has been equally generous in contributing to the current debate on the evolution or decline of cities, making particularly full use of archaeological material.

One of the core problems in using archaeological material is simply that its significance is subject to continual change. New information is emerging year on year, and older material is constantly being re-interpreted. Twenty years ago I was helped enormously by Wolf's study of Antioch when I was trying to understand a body of material that had been thrown up by the excavations at Aphrodisias, capital of the late Roman province of Caria.<sup>1</sup> Here twenty columns formed the western side of what is now known as the South Agora. An inscribed acclamation for a man called Albinus had been transcribed from a column by Sir Charles Fellows in 1840, and the same text was found again by Paul Gaudin in 1904.<sup>2</sup> There was no indication that this should be associated with two acclamations, similarly inscribed on columns, found at Aphrodisias in 1913: one acclaimed orthodox belief in one God, and the other acclaimed the Senate.<sup>3</sup> Only during the excavation of the area in the 1970s did it become clear that these three texts all came from the same colonnade. Read from left to right, they presented a series of acclamations, which opened with a statement of faith in the one God, then acclaimed the emperor and the other constituent elements of imperial government, and then honoured a particular local benefactor, Albinus. The case of this material therefore presents a paradigm of how new archaeological activity can alter existing knowledge – insignificant fragments, united by a new archaeological context, became elements in an informative whole.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Liebeschuetz 1972, 209-19, for a fundamental presentation of the evidence for acclamations and their use.

<sup>2</sup> Τὰ σὰ [κτ]ίσματα | αἰωνία *vac.* | ὑπόμνη- | *vac.* | σις | Ἀλβῖνε φιλοκτίστα: Fellows 1841, 63, whence Boeckh, *CIG* volume II.3 2809b (p. 1112); Reinach 1906, no. 33 (from Gaudin's copy), whence Grégoire 1922, no. 273.

<sup>3</sup> Εἰς τὸν † κόσμον | ὅλον εἰς ὁ Θεός and Πολλὰ | ἔτη τῆς | συνκλήτου: transcribed by G. Mendel during the excavations by A. Boulanger, and published by Grégoire 1922 (nos. 271 and 274) from Mendel's notebooks.

<sup>4</sup> All the texts published as a set by Roueché 1984, whence *SEG* 34, 1046-1065, *Bull.ép.* 1987.466, *Αἴ* 1984, 883; republished by Roueché 1989, nos. 83.i-xx, 84, whence PHI 1996 (1) *Inscriptions*, nos. 656, 845-862, 864; and now republished by Roueché as *ala2004*, no. 83.

Nevertheless, although the new context made these texts far more interesting, there remained many uncertainties. The man honoured in them, Albinus, is otherwise known only from a fragmentary verse inscription;<sup>5</sup> neither acclamations nor verse give us much hard data, beyond indicating that he was a generous local citizen, that he had the rank of *clarissimus*, and that he was not yet in the imperial Senate. The closest parallels for the wording were to be found in the Acts of the church councils of the fifth and sixth centuries. The acclamations mentioned plural emperors, and I tentatively dated Albinus to the first half of the sixth century. But I am very well aware of the high level of subjectivity that went into that dating.

It is clear from many sites that for every inscribed acclamation that has been found there were many more such texts painted. Fragmentary examples were found at Aphrodisias;<sup>6</sup> more strikingly, an important new set of painted acclamations for Justinian, from Phrygian Hierapolis, has recently been published.<sup>7</sup> One such group was found in unusually good condition at Aphrodisias in the 1960s; it was apparently painted on a plastered wall in the *tepidarium* of the Hadrianic Baths. The acclamations are presented within a circle; the same layout is often found with inscribed acclamations.<sup>8</sup> One text honours an imperial family (fig. 18.1); one acclaims the ‘faith of the Christians’; one seems to record a date; and there are other traces. The fullest of the texts, the one honouring the imperial family, reads:<sup>9</sup>

† νικ[ᾱ] ἡ τύχη  
τοῦ β[ασι]λέως·  
νικᾱ ἡ τ[ύ]χη τῆς  
δεσπο[ί]νης τοῦ νέου  
Θεοδο[σίου] πολ-  
λὰ [τὰ ἔ]τη.

... The fortune of the emperor triumphs! The fortune of the empress triumphs! Many years for the new Theodosius!

In my first publication of these texts, I looked for an emperor who might be acclaimed as ‘New Theodosius’, on the model of the acclamation ‘New Constantine’; and I devised a very elegant set of arguments explaining why this ought to be Anastasius.<sup>10</sup> The argumentation was pleasing, but almost certainly wrong. It was Gilbert Dagron who pointed out that the acclamation probably honours the emperor Maurice, his wife Constantia, and their new son, Theodosius – whose name was supported by factional acclamations when it was first announced.<sup>11</sup> These texts should therefore probably be dated to 583. Dagron pointed out the importance of the factions in Constantinople in the naming and proclamation of the new imperial child; the

<sup>5</sup> ala2004, no. 82.

<sup>6</sup> ala2004, nos. 77, 78.

<sup>7</sup> Miranda 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Compare at Ephesus *I.Ephesos* (IK 17.2) 4138, republished as Roueché 1999, no. 15.

<sup>9</sup> The underdotted Λ and Δ read in the first line of my edition (ala 2004, no. 61), are better understood as decoration, so that the text proper begins with the cross (as suggested to me by Benet Salway).

<sup>10</sup> Roueché 1989, no. 61, pp. 98-102.

<sup>11</sup> Dagron 1994, 111; cf. idem 1996, 47-48. See now my discussion at ala2004, Commentary V.30-31.



left hand fragment



right hand fragment

Figure 18.1. Painted acclamation to the imperial family, Hadrianic Baths, Aphrodisias (ala2004, no. 61)

(fragmentary) texts at Aphrodisias do not mention the factions, but make it clear that acclamation of such events was mirrored in the provinces. Moreover, there are parallels. The wife of Heraclius, Eudocia, bore him a son, Heraclius Constantinus, on 3 May 612. Eudocia died on 3 August of the same year,<sup>12</sup> but the birth had been marked by proclaiming both mother and son Augusti; a series of acclamations, honouring Heraclius, Eudocia and Constantine, were elegantly inscribed at Gortyn, capital of Crete.<sup>13</sup> At Gortyn the acclamations for the three are on separate columns of the Praetorium. They were also commemorated on two columns in the 'Marble Street' at Ephesus, one with an acclamation for Eudocia, and another with an acclamation for the two Heraclii, as 'New Constantines'.<sup>14</sup> This acclamation perhaps refers to the naming of the new heir as Heraclius Constantine, echoing the ambiguity of the inscriptions at Aphrodisias: the young Theodosius and Constantine are also welcomed

<sup>12</sup> See *PLRE* 3, Eudocia.

<sup>13</sup> *ICret* IV, 512.

<sup>14</sup> Roueché 1999, nos. 4 (Eudocia) and 6 (the Heraclii).

as possible 'new' imperial heroes. A third text, inscribed on the other side of the street, records the acclamation of the two Heraclii with the Greens.<sup>15</sup>

It may be, therefore, that acclamations such as those for Albinus should also be placed far later than the date I proposed, under Justinian. We have several examples of inscribed acclamations for Justinian;<sup>16</sup> but that is unsurprising given the length of his reign. What I recognise in myself is an unwillingness to date inscribed material later than the reign of Justinian, despite the fact that the evidence from Ephesus and Crete was already known to me. The later date for the painted acclamations clearly fits with what we know of other imperial acclamations. At Ephesus, for example, the only other emperor named in inscribed acclamations is Phocas,<sup>17</sup> and the acclamations at Ephesus flanked the Marble Street, which was also the location of a series of inscribed laws, put up in the late sixth century.<sup>18</sup> It can be said that the Ephesus material was at that time scattered unhelpfully across the corpus of inscriptions from the site; it was only after closer study and location of those texts that their significance became more apparent. These were not casual graffiti but formally inscribed texts. What these inscriptions suggest, therefore, is that the civic rituals and ceremonies well attested under Justinian were still being carried out in the early seventh century.

My unwillingness to allocate inscriptions to the later sixth century except very sparingly also stands in contrast to the more recent findings of archaeologists. Christopher Ratté has recently published a study of the archaeological evidence for the state of Aphrodisias in late antiquity.<sup>19</sup> Both the archaeological and the epigraphic evidence confirm continued building activity into the early sixth century. For the mid-sixth to mid-seventh century recent archaeological work is changing the picture. The North Agora was the subject of excavation during the 1990s; an abundance of coins was found there, suggesting use throughout the sixth century, with one coin of Phocas and three of Heraclius. More importantly, current excavations have started to study the residential areas of the city. This work continues: but so far the houses that have been studied appear to have remained in use well into the sixth century.<sup>20</sup>

These findings must be related to two further pieces of evidence. At some point between 610 and 619 Sophronius of Jerusalem wrote an account of the miracles (*thaumata*) performed posthumously by the Alexandrian saints, Cyrus and John, at Menouthis by the Nile's Canopic mouth. Among the many visitors to the shrine who received miraculous cures he lists a Stephanus of Aphrodisias.<sup>21</sup> This is the latest dateable use of the name for the city. In the Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680, the bishop of the city signs as bishop of Stauropolis

<sup>15</sup> Roueché 1999, 2.

<sup>16</sup> See most recently the survey of building inscriptions of Justinian by Feissel 2000, 83 and nos. 44, 45, 47, 51.

<sup>17</sup> Roueché 1999, nos. 3 and 11.

<sup>18</sup> Feissel 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Ratté 2001.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 138–40.

<sup>21</sup> Sophronius, *Mir. SS. Cyr. et Ioh.* (PG 87.3, 3423–3676/ Fernandez Marcos 1975 [with discussion in Spanish]). The Aphrodisias story is *Thauma* 10.

– ‘city of the Cross’, a newly christianised name for the ‘city of Aphrodite’.<sup>22</sup> It is of course not entirely clear whether the use of such a name by a bishop in such a context is comparable with the usage in a literary text: the new name of Theoupolis did not eliminate the name of Antioch on the Orontes, for example. The name Aphrodisias was used by the bishop of the city at the Council of Constantinople of 553, which can serve as a definite *terminus post quem* for the name change; it is also found in the *History* of John of Ephesus, written in the 580s, but here too we cannot be certain about the strictness of the usage.<sup>23</sup>

What makes this dating important is that the name was also changed on one inscription in the city. The north-east gate in the city walls carries two texts: one honouring the governor who put up the wall in the mid-to-late fourth century, and one recording the restoration of the gate in the mid-fifth century.<sup>24</sup> The second text includes the term ‘of the Aphrodisians’, which at some point was carefully replaced with ‘of the Stauropolitans’.<sup>25</sup> We cannot know whether the same change was made on the other gate inscription in the walls, which also almost certainly referred to ‘the Aphrodisians’, since the relevant part of the text is lost.<sup>26</sup> But sufficient of that text remains for us to determine that it was not otherwise modified. On the north-east gate, however, at some time in its history, the upper, earlier text was altered by the cutting of a cross with an alpha and omega (fig. 18.2).<sup>27</sup> It is tempting, and economical, to associate this ‘christianising’ of the otherwise secular fourth-century text with the christianising of the city’s name in the adjacent fifth-century text.

The change of name of the city appears to have had an impact in only one other public place. Although the term ‘Aphrodisian’ appears in many places in the city, the only other place where it was erased is in the texts cut on the north parodos wall of the theatre (the so-called ‘Archive Wall’) – a selection of documents sent by the Roman authorities to the city of Aphrodisias, which was inscribed on the theatre wall in the mid-third century.<sup>28</sup> At some point in the history of these documents, there was a careful attempt to erase the whole word, or at least the ‘Aphrodi’ element from the terms ‘Aphrodite’, ‘Aphrodisias’ and ‘Aphrodisian’. The policy

22 Mansi 1769-98/1901-27, 11 (1775/1901), 672.

23 On all this see my discussion at ala2004, Commentary VI.49.

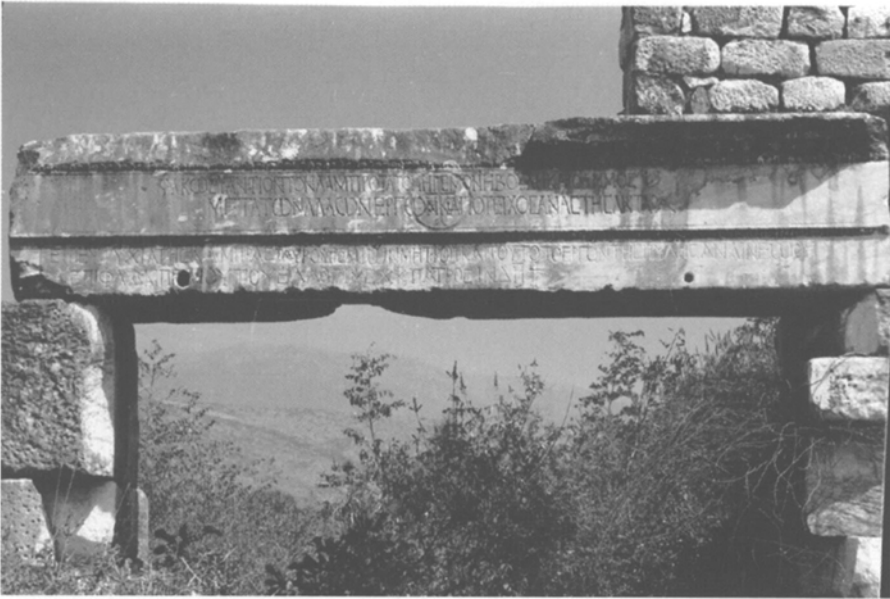
24 Upper (fourth-century) text: ala2004, no. 22: Φλ(άβιον) Κωστάντιον (*sic*) τὸν λαμπρότατον ἡγεμόνα ἢ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος | μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἔργων καὶ ὁ τεῖχος ἀναστήσαντα; lower (fifth-century) text: *ibid.* no. 42: † Ἐπὶ εὐτυχίᾳ τῆς λαμράς Α[φ]ρο[δισια]ίων μητροπ(όλεως) καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἔργον τῆς πύλης ἀναινεώθη | † ἐπὶ Φλ(αβίου) Ἀμπελίου τοῦ ἐλλογιμ(ωτάτου) σχο(λαστικοῦ) κ(αὶ) πατρός· ἰνδ(ικτίωνος) ἡ´ †.

25 Recarved to read: Ἐπὶ εὐτυχίᾳ τῆς λαμράΣταυρουπολιτῶν (*sic*) μητροπ(όλεως) ..., with the Σ being made to do double service as the final letter of λαμράς and initial letter of Σταυρουπολιτῶν (see fig. 18.2b).

26 ala2004, no. 19.

27 This change is most easily seen by examination of the images on-line at ala2004, no. 22.

28 The monument was discussed, and the texts published, by Reynolds 1982.



a) general view of commemorative dedications (ala2004, nos 22 and 42)



b) detail showing over-carved Christianising alterations

Figure 18.2. Lintel of northeast gate of the city wall at Aphrodisias.

was not consistently carried out, and there are more erasures in the lower than in the upper registers.<sup>29</sup>

These erasures and changes mark an important shift in the self-image of the city. But they are also important evidence for the history of the city in the later sixth or seventh century. The modification of the inscriptions on the north-east gate must indicate that that gate was still significant, and therefore that the circuit of walls, which represented the outline of the city of the Roman imperial period, still served as the boundary of Aphrodisias. Restoration work on the walls seems to have involved the re-use of an inscription invoking the '318 fathers of Nicaea', which cannot be much earlier than the fifth century.<sup>30</sup> This, taken in conjunction with the evidence emerging from the houses on the site, may suggest that the population had not diminished substantially by this time. Since, at the earliest, the name change had not taken place in 553, this argument tends to undermine previous ideas of mine about the impact of the Justinianic plague at Aphrodisias, or at least, of the first wave of that plague.

It is perhaps even more interesting that the other monument to be modified was the Archive Wall. This suggests, first, that in some sense this great record of the city's privileges, and its relationship with imperial government, was still understood to be significant. This is perhaps understandable when we consider that major imperial documents were still being inscribed (for example) at Ephesus in this period.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it would seem to indicate that the theatre at Aphrodisias was still the focus of public activity and interest.<sup>32</sup> We cannot be very certain what form that activity took. It may still have been used for spectacles of some kind, although it can be argued that the cessation of such activities is implied by the building of a small 'chapel' within the stage buildings at some point in the sixth century.<sup>33</sup> It is not clear that we can be certain that Christian activity in the stage buildings would preclude the staging of entertainments; in any case it will not have prevented public 'political' gatherings and ceremonies, such as the presentation of the images of a new emperor. It may well be that the image of Theodosius, the new-born son of Maurice, was presented and acclaimed here.

Whether or not that is the case, the painted acclamations for the son of Maurice in the Hadrianic baths, discussed above, suggest that these buildings too still had significance for the community in the last decades of the sixth century. We know that in the early sixth century the city still had funds from whose income they were paying for the maintenance of the baths; and we know that some restoration work was undertaken in the baths by a sixth-century benefactor, Rhodopaeus.<sup>34</sup> The new dating suggests that the baths – or at least part of them – remained in use in the 580s, and perhaps that their maintenance was the responsibility of a civic official, the 'father of the city', who seems to be mentioned in one of the texts.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* xv.

<sup>30</sup> ala2004, no. 112. For a reference to the 318 fathers dated to 431, see, for example, *ACOec* I, 1.7, no. 76.1 (cited by Millar 2004, 119-20).

<sup>31</sup> Feissel 1999.

<sup>32</sup> Roueché 1991, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Cormack 1991.

<sup>34</sup> ala2004, no. 85-87; on 86 see the sensible modifications of Marek 2000, 380 n. 53.

<sup>35</sup> ala2004, no. 61.ii.



In sum, I would say that there is more evidence than I had at first perceived for the survival of recognisable civic traditions at Aphrodisias, and at Ephesus, into the late sixth century and probably the early years of the seventh century. It remains, however, to consider what form those traditions took at this period. How should we interpret this evidence? How can we use it to respond to the questions posed by Wolf? Is there decline, and if so, what is declining?

Most striking, perhaps, is the careful erasure of the pagan terminology on the Archive Wall. This would seem to indicate a continuing concern with the city's past and its documentation. It is worth considering, also, that these documents recorded the relationship of the city to the emperors. In Ephesus, by the end of the sixth century, the main streets presented the viewer with an array of imperial pronouncements. These huge imperial documents are all the more striking for being inscribed at a period when the volume of inscriptions as a whole had declined. At Ephesus the thoroughfare known as the Embolos gives a sense of the impact of such huge documents, since we can still see there the two letters of Valens to the proconsuls Eutropius and Festus.<sup>36</sup> Denis Feissel is studying these publicly inscribed imperial texts, and his recent careful catalogue gives a good impression of their abundance and impact.<sup>37</sup> While those of the fourth and fifth century are found in the Embolos, by the sixth century the prime location for such texts has moved to the Marble Street; several inscribed there can be dated to the sixth century, but the two precisely dateable texts from this area are from 569 and 585. It was these texts that faced the columns bearing the acclamations of Phocas and Heraclius.

Acclamations have been the subject of considerable study in the last few years. They are not a late antique innovation; their use as a way for groups to sway official opinion can be well documented in the imperial period – most obviously when they are used to influence judgements and punishments, sending Jesus to crucifixion or Christians to the lions.<sup>38</sup> Such activities were normally aimed at influencing government officials in their presence – so, most obviously, in the auditoria. In the late third century, the city of Termessos in Lycia produced a series of acclamations for Hermaios, their local 'brigand-chaser', asking for him to be kept in office; those acclamations were inscribed, as far as we know, not at Termessos but at a village in the territory that was probably the centre of Hermaios' power-base.<sup>39</sup> To be effective the record of these *phōnai* ('utterances') cannot only have been inscribed in the remote location where they were found; they must have been sent to the appropriate authority. The acclamations refer frequently to the *polis*; but they are focused on a single individual. At some point in the third century the council of a city near Aydin – probably Magnesia – received a letter from the governor recording the privileges of the village of the Pyleitai in their territory. The council acknowledged the letter with acclamations for the governor; they then went on to acclaim the local magnate, Eumelus, patron (*kēdemōn*) of the Pyleitai. The villagers subsequently had inscribed both the letter, and the acclamations, which both confirmed their privileges, but also reinforced the status of Eumelus.<sup>40</sup> There are similarities to the wording

36 *I.Ephesos* (IK 11.1) 42-43, with images on Tafeln 33 & 34.

37 Feissel 1999, 121-132, esp 126-27.

38 See Potter 1996.

39 Ballance and Roueché 2001.

40 Malay 1988, with the considerations of Nollé 1990, 121-26.

of a papyrus document of the late third century, listing the acclamations of a *prytanis*, Dioscuros.<sup>41</sup> He too is acclaimed as *kēdemōn* of Oxyrhynchus.

In 331 Constantine, famously, issued a law arranging for acclamations of governors to be reported to the praetorian prefect.<sup>42</sup> It is now clear that in doing so he was not introducing a radical new procedure, but regularising something that was already happening, and perhaps with increasing frequency. Constantine may have been concerned not to encourage more such communications, but to sort out a proper structure for them.

But, as Wolf long ago pointed out, this process, giving a quasi-official status to mass demonstrations, had the effect of strengthening the powerful individuals who could organise such events. At Edessa, in 448, it was the *comes* Theodosius and those around him who organised the acclamations which led to the deposition of the bishop Ibas.<sup>43</sup> The acclamations for Albinus, at Aphrodisias, start with the imperial authorities, but then go on to honour an individual, Albinus, just as, for example, acclamations at Amida honour a *magister militum* (στρατηλάτης), Theodorus.<sup>44</sup> At Aphrodisias one notable, Pytheas, apparently had a group of supporters, Pytheanitai;<sup>45</sup> a late antique inscription on the Letoon, at Xanthos, acclaims the Mariani – presumably supporters of a Marios, perhaps like the Augustiani who acclaimed Nero.<sup>46</sup> In Oxyrhynchus, the Apion estate provided funds for public entertainments, by funding the Blues, and also (less often) the Greens, and great men in Constantinople seem to have offered similar patronage; it seems entirely likely that they will have been thanked with acclamations.<sup>47</sup>

The resultant structure, therefore, is one of a population looking directly to the emperor, and to those who represent him, and an emperor looking to those who can deliver control of that population. This is the world reflected in the cityscape of Ephesus in the sixth and early seventh century, dominated by enormous inscribed imperial texts, and acclamations of the imperial powers. As has been suggested, the erasures on the archive wall at Aphrodisias indicate the continuing significance, in the late sixth century, of the imperial texts. The recorded acclamations that we have make little or no mention of the civic authorities; instead groups, particularly the factions – presumably organised by their patrons – deliver the acclamations and the loyalty of the people. This is emphasised by the location of an acclamation for Christian Emperors and the Greens on the monumental gate (the ‘Hadrianstor’) at the north end of the Marble Street; the reconstruction of that gate makes it clear that the inscription was one of a matching pair, and it seems highly likely that the

41 *P.Oxy.* I 41; on which see Blume 1989.

42 *CTh* 1.16.6, whence *CJ* 1.40.3.

43 As pointed out by Liebeschuetz 2001a, 106; see the recent discussion (and translation into German) of this material, within a full account of the phenomena, by Wiemer 2004.

44 *SEG* 41.1514–1516, from Mango and Mango 1991, nos. 5–7.

45 *ala2004*, no. 59

46 *Tac. Ann.* 14.15.8–9

47 For a judicious summary see Liebeschuetz 2001a, 206–07.

balancing text acclaimed the Christian Emperors and the Blues.<sup>48</sup> The naming of both Blues and Greens would be sufficient to indicate 'the whole city' to which one of the inscriptions for Albinus refers; such emphasis on the unanimity of the whole community is a recurrent feature of acclamations. In any case, there is no mention of the role of any civic authorities.

As I have said, when I was first dealing with the phenomenon of acclamations, I turned to Wolf's *Antioch*, where he sets out the evidence for acclamations and their use as revealing 'the decline of curial government. . . . The development of the acclamations is quite parallel to that of patronage.'<sup>49</sup> A growing body of archaeological evidence, and more refined information about the context of some discoveries, has added to this picture. The evidence from Aphrodisias in the sixth century shows a still prosperous community, apparently capable of maintaining essential services – baths, or the city walls; the evidence from Ephesus shows substantial inscriptions still being put up. But these are also communities whose means of political expression have altered in fundamental ways. While they are still apparently capable of communal activity, their self-image or self-representation seems to have changed; they are concerned to assert, and to advertise, their relationship to the emperor, but their expressions of loyalty are mediated through the acclamations of the community, not the decrees of a civic government, and frequently through the structures of the factions – which themselves represent an empire-wide structure, quite independent of the civic institutions. The community that came to call itself Stauropolis may have believed itself to be the same entity as the previous Aphrodisias, but a series of incremental changes – that had started in the third century – meant that it was now organically different. That process was certainly a transformation; for some of the civic institutions that had survived from Hellenistic times it was undoubtedly a decline, and eventually a fall.

48 Roueché 1999, no. 7 and discussion there.

49 Liebeschuetz 1972, 218.